

Few Ranch Women Realize What Fine Plumbers Their Mates Are

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MERTZON — Until a few weeks ago the weather was so unseasonably warm in this country, which the Arapahoes once called “the land of forever-empty wampum pouches,” that we were beginning to wonder if our short grass country might soon compete with Florida for the winter tourist trade.

However, this had to end. At the time of this writing, about the only thing that isn’t frozen, indoors or out, is the perspiration trickling down the faces of ranchers as they chop the ice off water troughs. And to be accurate, not every stockman out thrashing about in the cold is motivated by the ambition to water his stock. Quite a number of them are braving this first cold spell of the year simply because the pasture is more peaceful than the confines of their homes due to the frozen condition of incoming and outgoing water lines.

The emotional outbursts of a ranch wife when water pipes are all frozen often surpass those of a Latin American war party. Any male who has ever become involved in a martial contract of substantial duration will attest that no facet of modern civilization can create more discord in this sacred union than the failure of a home plumbing system. Of all the bouts, skirmishes and pitched battles which have taken place in the last half century or so (and I include all types of affray, from political arguments to bitter inner family squabbles), no other incident can compare to the awful rows that have arisen as result of the husband’s apparent or suspected indifference to restoring running water for his mate’s personal and household needs.

Furthermore, it wouldn’t be surprising in the future to hear that some busybody marriage expert had adopted a policy of advising young love-struck girls to shun marriage until she knew the prospective husband was able to operate a torch underneath a house and was capable of doing more with a pipe wrench than skinning his knuckles. Such a test, I might add, could result in 99.44% of the sheep and cow persons being buried without ever having experienced the joys of married life.

One of the most discouraging features of this pipe-and-woman versus man business is that while females realize that their spouses are slightly less adept at mending and thawing tubular goods than a chicken plucker would be laying mosaic tile, they fail to recognize that within the scope of the ranching country there resides some of the nation’s most expert hands in the art of stopping water leaks with nothing more than baling wire and discarded inner tubes.

Yes, without doubt, most ranchers are champions of the inner tube game. Other than their unchallenged superiority at being able to maintain 30 miles of fence on forked sticks, no single trait is so common among all classes and nationalities of ranchmen than being able to use a string of perforated, split, worn-out pipe for some three decades beyond its ordinary life span.

However, all this may change some day. The time probably is near when the tubeless tire will take over. Hay will be baled exclusively in twine. Then the nimbler fingered rancher will lose his last connection with the plumbing trade.

But I hope that before this last thread with the past is broken that the ladies of this land of rolling weeds and blowing dust will realize how lucky they were to have lived close to the master of the art of making a piece of baling wire and scrap of rubber move and contain so many gallons of water through so much worthless pipe.